

UKRAINE CONFLICT

RUSSIA SAYS WEST IS TRYING TO START WORLD WAR THREE

HARROWING: Lavrov raises the spectre of nuclear armageddon

by Ceren Sagir

RUSSIA warned that the West was provoking World War III yesterday as Nato is "pouring oil on the fire" of the Ukraine conflict.

In a TV appearance, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that the threat of nuclear conflict "should not be underestimated" as Moscow's offensive in Ukraine continued.

He said that Russia has "a feeling that the West wants Ukraine to continue to fight and, as it seems to them, wear out, exhaust the Russian army and the Russian military-industrial war complex. This is an illusion."

Weapons supplied by Western countries "will be a legitimate target," Mr Lavrov said, accusing Ukrainian leaders of provoking Russia by asking Nato to become involved in the conflict.

"Everyone is reciting incan-

tations that in no case can we allow World War III," he said.

Mr Lavrov said that he would not want to see risks of a nuclear confrontation "artificially inflated now, when the risks are rather significant."

"The danger is serious," he said. "It is real. It should not be underestimated."

"Nato, in essence, is engaged in a war with Russia through a proxy and is arming that proxy. War means war."

The statement appeared to be in response to US Secretary of State Antony Blinken claiming that "Russia is failing, Ukraine is succeeding" in the war, confirming a \$165 million (£139.3m) sale of ammunition.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said that the US wants "to see Russia weakened" in an apparent shift from earlier claims from the US that its goal was to help defend Nato neighbours from Russian threats.

Meanwhile, local officials said that at least nine people

had been killed and several more wounded by Russian attacks on towns and cities in eastern Ukraine.

Donetsk governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said that Russian forces "continue to deliberately fire at civilians and to destroy critical infrastructure."

In the small city of Toretsk in the Donbass region, residents have reported that they are struggling to survive, collecting rainwater for cleaning and washing up.

In its latest assessment, the British Defence Ministry described Russian advances and heavy fighting in the east, with one town, Kreminna, reportedly falling after days of street-to-street fighting.

United Nations secretary-general Antonio Guterres met Mr Lavrov yesterday to repeat his calls for a ceasefire.

The UN chief was scheduled to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin later in the day.
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CARNAGE: A Ukrainian serviceman walks amid the rubble of a building heavily damaged by multiple Russian bombardments (top) while locals watch as a residential building burns (bottom), near a front line in Kharkiv, Ukraine, on Monday

in brief

Another injured coalminer dies

POLAND: The death toll of workers and rescuers from two coalmine accidents last week in southern Poland rose to 13 yesterday after another injured miner died.

The miner died at the Siemianowice Slaskie hospital where 20 other coalmine workers were still being treated for injuries from methane gas blasts.

The search for seven other missing miners remained suspended after rescuers were hurt.

Boat capsizes off the Canary Islands

SPAIN: A boat carrying migrants capsized off Spain's Canary Islands on Monday, leaving one person dead and another 24 missing.

Spanish authorities intercepted three boats heading to the islands, rescuing a total of 116 people.

Two of the boats were located while the third was found capsized with the body of a woman.

Gunman kills two kids & one woman

RUSSIA: A gunman killed two children and a woman at a kindergarten in central Russia yesterday, authorities revealed.

A man entered the kindergarten in the town of Veshkayma and shot a female staff member and two children, ages five and six, before shooting himself.

The motive of the gunman, a 26-year-old mentally ill man, was not immediately clear.

Man shot to death after Israeli raid

PALESTINE: A 20-year-old Palestinian man was killed yesterday after "undercover" Israeli forces stormed a refugee camp in the West Bank overnight.

Ahmed Ibrahim Oweidat "succumbed to critical wounds sustained by live bullets to the head at dawn today in Aqabat Jaber camp" near Jericho, the Palestinian health ministry said.

ALLIANCES

Nato promises to militarily protect Sweden and Finland

NATO protection has been promised to Sweden by the United States and Britain ahead of a membership launch, it was revealed yesterday.

The two member nations have given the bidder "concrete promises" of military protection between their applications to join Nato and the formal acceptance into the alliance.

Although appearing neutral since the 19th century, Sweden is reportedly preparing to abandon its policy of non-alignment following the war in Ukraine.

Finland is also planning to launch a bid.

One government source said that while Nato members are forbidden from expressing any formal

guarantees of protection to non-members, they would still be able to take informal measures like stationing troops in Sweden, hosting military exercises, and offering "political support."

"In practice, Sweden will be treated as a full-fledged Nato member shortly after a declaration of interest," the source told Aftonbladet newspaper, claiming that Britain has specifically offered to increase its naval presence in Swedish waters during the application process.

Russia, which shares an 830-mile border with Finland, has warned such a move could force it to "restore military balance" in the Baltic region.

BIG TECH

Leftists leave Twitter after billionaire Musk's takeover

by Ceren Sagir

ELON MUSK'S \$44 billion (£34.5bn) purchase of Twitter to turn it into a "free speech" haven led to activists, public figures and celebrities deleting their accounts in protest yesterday.

Writer and Black Lives Matter activist Shaun King said that he was logging out of the social media site.

He wrote: "At its root, Elon Musk wanting to purchase Twitter is about white power."

"The man was raised in apartheid by a white nationalist. He's upset that Twitter won't allow white nationalists to target/harass people. That's his definition of free speech."

Comic book creator Erik Larsen and actor Jameela Jamil were also among those who left the platform. US Senator Elizabeth Warren tweeted: "This deal is dangerous for our democracy."



NEW BOSS: Elon Musk

"Billionaires like Elon Musk play by a different set of rules than everyone else, accumulating power for their own gain."

"We need a wealth tax and strong rules to hold big tech accountable."

In the US, terms like "censorship" and "free speech" have turned into political rallying cries for conservatives as right-leaning commentators and high-profile Republican officials are

being booted off Facebook and Twitter for violating their rules by sharing hate speech or false content.

Last year, Mr Musk criticised former US president Donald Trump's permanent ban from Twitter following the Capitol riot. Mr Trump's allies, including his son Donald Trump Jr, have previously pleaded for Mr Musk to buy out the company.

Amnesty International said that it was concerned that Twitter will go back on policies that protect users.

It wrote: "The last thing we need is a Twitter that willfully turns a blind eye to violent and abusive speech against users, particularly those most disproportionately impacted, including women, non-binary persons and others."

Mr Musk regularly blocks social media users who have criticised him or his company.

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